DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 124 848 CG 010 636

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TITLE Research on Counselor Discrimination Against Female Clients.
PUB DATE 4 Nov 75
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the 10th Anniversary Meeting of the Michigan Personnel and Guidance Association (Detroit, Michigan, November 2-4, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bias; *Counselor Attitudes; *Discriminatory Attitudes (Social); *Females; *Guidance; Psychotherapy; Research Reviews (Publications); *Sex Discrimination; Sex Stereotypes; Speeches; State of the Art Reviews

ABSTRACT

The significant research dealing with counselor bias toward women in vocational and personal guidance is presented. Many of the well-known studies in this area have been done in Michigan, using Michigan counselors as subjects. Studies done by Abramowitz, Broverman, Donahue, Goldberg, Hawley, Pringle, Slossberg, and Thomas, as well as The American Psychological Association's report of the task force on sex bias and sex role stereotyping in psychotherapeutic practice, and the report of the task force on sex stereotyping in Michigan schools are discussed. Special emphasis is placed on personal and environmental characteristics which tend to cause bias, such as a counselor's mother's educational attainment, the demographic location of the counselor's work setting, the sex and age of the counselor, client dependency, and client deviate or conforming career goals. The paper concludes with a discussion about the value, significance, and reliability of the findings, and a brainstorming session on ways to end this bias, which is usually nonmalicious, unconscious, and prevalent throughout our culture. (Author)

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PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION

TITLE: Research on Counselor Discrimination against Female Clients

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The significant research dealing with counselor bias toward women in vocational and personal guidance will be presented. Many of the well-known studies in this area have been done in Michigan, using Michigan counselors as subjects. Studies done by Abramowitz, Broverman, Donahue, Goldberg, Hawley, Pringle, Slossberg, and Thomas, as well as The American Psychological Association's report of the task force on sex bias and sex role stereotyping in psychotherapeutic practice, and the report of the task force on sex stereotyping in Michigan schools will be discussed.

Special emphasis will be placed on personal and environmental characteristics which tend to cause bias, such as a counselor's mother's educational attainment, the demographic location of the counselor's work setting, the sex and age of the counselor, client dependency, and client deviate or conforming career goals. The meeting will conclude with a discussion about the value, significance and reliability of the findings, and a brainstorming session on ways to end this bias, which is usually non-malicious, unconscious, and prevalent throughout our culture.

9:00 A.M. - TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1975

ROOM 3177 COBO HALL

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Presented to the 1975 Michigan Personnel and Guidance Association Convention

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During the last five years a great deal of research has been done which deals with counseling women. Broverman (1970)[1] and her colleagues found a double standard of mental health among therapists. Using 122 bipolar items, they asked therapists to describe a healthy, mature and socially competent (1) adult (sex unspecified), (2) man, and (3) woman. It was found that the description of the healthy man and healthy adult coincided whereas a healthy female coincided with terms that would have indicated an unhealthy and immature adult! Terms such as passive, easily influenced, and very emotional were used to describe the mature socially competent female. In later studies the researchers found that these stereotypes existed not only among therapists, but across groups differing in sex, age, marital status, and education. Furthermore, they found that therapists felt the differentiation and strong sex-role identity contributed to good mental health.[2]

Recently Maslin and Davis (1975) replicated the Broverman research using counselors-in-training for subjects.[3] Essentially, their results indicated the same multiple standards of mental health as shown in Broverman's study, except that female counselors-in-training held relatively androgynous views.

Sandra Bem (1975) established the foundation for research showing that an androgynous personality is healthier than either the personality of the masculine male or the feminine female.[4] She cites several empirical studies that have indicated:

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1 Broverman, I., et al, "Sex-role Stereotypes and Clinical Judgments of Mental Health", Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1970, 34, 1, Pp. 1-7.

2 Broverman, I., et al, "Sex-Role Stereotypes: A Current Appraisal", Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1972, 59-77.

3 Maslin, A., and Davis, J.L., "Sex-Role Stereotyping as a factor in Mental Health Standards among Counselors in Training", Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1975, Vol. 22, No. 2, Pp. 87-91.

4 Bem, S.L., "Fluffy Women and Chesty Men", Psychology Today, Sept., 1975, Vol. 9, No. 4, Pp. 58-62.

> "High femininity in females consistently correlates with high anxiety, low self-esteem, and low self-acceptance. And, although high masculinity in males has been related to better psychological adjustment during adolescence, it is often accompanied during adulthood by high anxiety, high neuroticism, and low self-acceptance."[1]

Furthermore, Bem showed that feminine women find it difficult to be independent and assertive and that masculine males are less playful, less responsive to warmth, and rigid in their sexual behavior. Androgynous personalities, on the other hand, are more flexible, creative, playful, and able to express a wider range of emotion and purposive behavior than either of the extremes. Perhaps Bem's work is just the beginning of another phase of the politics of mental health. However, the androgynous personality will certainly be a subject of acute discussion during the next few years.

Pringle (1973) found that client sex, counselor sex, and client behavior all have a significant effect on the outcomes of counseling.[2] She found that when clients exhibited behavior that was sex appropriate by traditional sex-role norms, male counselors tended to evaluate clients by the clients' success in coping with the environment and female counselors tended to evaluate clients by the clients' feelings about themselves. When clients' behaviors were not sex appropriate, male and female counselors reversed their orientations toward clients. Male counselors were also found to be more supportive of dependence and high achievement. During the interviews, female counselors tended to reveal their own values and act more directly than male counselors.

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1 IBID, P. 59.

2 Pringle, M.B., "The Responses of Counselors to Behaviors Associated with Independence and Achievement in Male and Female Clients", University of Michigan, PhD Dissertation, 1973, ERIC: ED071008.

Pringle maintained that female deviance in the direction of male norms has been more accepted and less punished by society than male deviance in the direction of female norms. She referred to the research by McClain (1968)[1] who concluded that although female counselors were more emotionally stable, assertive, conscientious, venturesome (i.e., socially bold), trusting, self-assured and liberal than other adult females, male counselors tended to have traditional feminine values (i.e., they were sensitive, dependent, trusting, placid, practical, conservative, group dependent, and relaxed).

All counselors had a significantly greater desire to change the behavior of the low achieving male client than that of the low achieving female client. However, female counselors indicated a significantly greater desire than male counselors to change the behavior of dependent female clients and of high achieving clients of either sex. Although counselors preferred not to evaluate their clients, when they did, male counselors evaluated male clients as being healthier than female clients. Male counselors were directly and negatively responsive to stereotypic images of sex-appropriate behavior.

Hawley (1972) found a significant relationship between the careers women choose and their beliefs regarding men's views of the feminine ideal.[2] Women preparing for traditionally feminine careers believed that significant men in their lives dichotomized attitudes and behaviors into male and female categories. Women preparing for non-traditional careers did not perceive this, but seemed far more concerned with male approval than those entering traditional careers. Only one tenth of those preparing for non-traditional careers

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[1] McClain, Edwin W., "Is the Counselor a Woman?", Personnel and Guidance Journal, 46 (January, 1968): 444-488.

[2] Hawley, P., "Perceptions of Male Models of Femininity Related to Career Choice", Journal of Consulting Psychology, 1972. Vol. 19, No. 4, 308-313

said they would pursue their present career goals over the objection of significant men in their lives.

Abramowitz (1973) and his colleagues found that, on the basis of their test protocols, nonliberal examiners attributed significantly greater psychological maladjustment to the leftist politically active female client than to her male counterpart.[1] In more recent research (1975) using a very small sample, he found that on the basis of a short interview and psycho-educational records, relatively traditional counselors imputed greater maladjustment to female medical school aspirants than to male aspirants.[2]

Using a different experimental method, Schlossberg and Petrofessa (1970) arrived at the same conclusion, namely, "that counselor bias exists against women entering a masculine occupation."[3] Coached female clients (who supposedly could not decide whether to enter engineering, a masculine occupation, or a feminine occupation such as teaching) were seen by counselors-in-training. Biased statements made by the counselors were catalogued and analyzed: 81.3 percent of the biased statements were against women and only 18.7 percent were in favor of them. Female counselors displayed as much bias as did their male counterparts. Although Schlossberg and Petrofessa's study is clearly significant research, it had the limitation of using a student population rather than practicing professional counselors.

Abramowitz, S.I., et al, "The Politics of Clinical Judgment: What Nonliberal Examiners infer about Women Who do not Stifle Themselves," Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1973, Vol. 41, No. 3, 385-391.

Abramowitz, S.I., et al, "Comparative Counselor Inferences toward Women with Medical School Aspirations", Journal of College Student Personnel, March, 1975, Vol. 16, No. 2, Pp. 128-130.

Schlossberg, N.K., and Petrofessa, J.J., Counselor Bias and the Female Occupational Role. Detroit: Wayne State University, 1970 (ERIC CG 006056).

In similar research, Thomas and Stewart (1971)[1] used a sample of sixty-two volunteer practicing school counselors in suburban St. Paul, Minnesota. They divided the counselors into groups and showed them three videotapes: an introductory tape, a tape of an interview with a client who chose deviate career goals, and an interview with a client who chose a conforming career goal. The counselors assessed the client on a list of forty-two adjectives, evaluated the degree to which they felt the career objective was appropriate for the client, assessed the degree to which they felt the client was in need of additional counseling, and suggested two additional career choices that would be appropriate for the client to consider.

Female counselors gave higher acceptance scores to both deviate and conforming clients than did male counselors. The authors also found that as they become more experienced, male counselors showed increased acceptance and female counselors showed decreased acceptance of deviate career goals. Regardless of their sex, counselors rated conforming goals as more appropriate than deviate goals. Counselors also rated female clients with deviate career goals to be more in need of counseling than those with conforming goals. Experienced counselors perceived either type of career goal to be appropriate, whereas inexperienced counselors perceived the conforming goals to be significantly more appropriate than the deviate career goals.

The Thomas and Stewart study is well designed and forms a good foundation for my own research, which reaffirmed many of their findings. Showing the taped interviews to groups of counselors may have introduced a confounding variable into the responses, since a counselor-subject could easily ascertain and mirror the reaction of the group. There was also a potentially biasing

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[1] Thomas, A., and Stewart, N., "Counselor Response to Female Clients with Deviate and Conforming Career Goals", Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1971, Vol. 18, No. 4, Pp. 352-357.

effect in the introductory tape, which cannot be evaluated on the basis of the research report alone. Nevertheless, this study is a landmark that demonstrated, more than any other study to date, that counselor bias against women in career selection exists.

Hipple's research (1975) attempted to assess and compare the perceptions high school counselors and college freshmen held of the female sex role by using the MAFERR Inventory of Feminine Values.[1] Using that inventory is tantamount to asking a counselor, "Are you prejudiced against women?" The only correct answer a counselor can give is, "No!" Of course, nearly all of them responded correctly. Hipple's data reflected nothing more than the halo effect of that resounding "No!" and, therefore, led to erroneous conclusions. After reviewing the literature, he stated, "The literature seems to indicate that counselors subscribe to traditional views regarding the value of careers for women".[2] This became his hypothesis, which was rejected because of poor methodology in his data collection. Notwithstanding his rejection of the hypothesis, the statement must still stand as the apparent truth.

Naffziger (1972) also studied counselor attitudes toward women's roles.[3] She found that women described their ideal woman as one who is more extra-family oriented than the ideal projected by men. Women also projected the ideal woman as being more responsible for the success of the marriage, although they also were more accepting of working mothers than were males. Men suggested that career women are less attractive than non-career women, although

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[1] Hipple, J.L., "Perceptual Differences in the Concepts of the Ideal Woman", The School Counselor, Jan. 1975, Vol. 22, 3, 180-5.

[2] IBID, p. 181.

[3] Naffziger, K.G., "A Survey of Counselor-Educators' and other Selected Professionals' Attitudes toward Women's Roles", (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon) Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1972, No. 72-956.

men supported the ideal woman who would argue against authority. Naffziger found no significant differences among counselors of various ages, although many significant differences existed between male and female counselors.

Bingham and House (1973)[1] contributed two research studies dealing with high school counselors and female clients. The first was a forty-nine item true-false test to examine the counselors' accuracy of information about women in the labor force.[2] They found that male counselors were less accurately informed than females about the occupational status of women. The authors stated, "The apparent misinformation in this case is a function of negative attitudes, of response tendencies tuned to deny the obvious information". They claimed the misinformation was the result of selective perception on the part of both male and female counselors. The ready availability of relevant information about women suggests that the problem is attitudinal.

In their second report on the attitudes of counselors, Bingham and House used an attitudinal questionnaire about women.[3] The direct questionnaire method, using an unvalidated instrument, is not necessarily an accurate assessment of attitudes which may be expressed in behavior. The questionnaire yielded a large amount of data, some of which is self-contradictory. However, female counselors might better serve female clients than male counselors.

Since my own research is very recent and unpublished, I will describe it in more detail. The purpose of my study was to determine if high school

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1 Bingham, W.C., and House, E.W., "Counselors View Women and Work: Accuracy of Information", Vocational Guidance Quarterly, Sept. 1973, Vol. 21, No. 4.

2 IBID, p. 267.

3 Bingham, W.C., and House, E.W., "Counselors' Attitudes toward Women and Work", Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 1973, 22, 1, Pp. 16-23.

counselors, when considering careers for female students, have a predisposition toward occupations that pay less, require less education, and need more supervision than careers considered for male students. In addition, an attempt was made to ascertain if certain personal characteristics of school counselors and selected environmental variables are correlated with such a predisposition. It was felt that a study of this type is important in order to heighten counselor awareness that such a condition may exist and to provide data useful for the improvement of both in-service and university-based counselor education programs.

A random sample of three-hundred counselors in senior high schools throughout Michigan was asked to select from a list of 28 occupations the most appropriate occupation for each of three male and three female case study subjects. The personal characteristics of the student in each case study could describe either a male or a female. Two forms of the case study questionnaire were developed. Each form contained identical case study information. However, on the second form, the sex designation of each case study subject was the opposite of the sex designation of the first form. Thus, each case was presented to half of the counselors in the sample as a male student, and to the other half of the counselors in the sample as a female student.

On a short personal data sheet, attached to the case study questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide information related to the independent variables: sex, marital status, age, professional training and experience, and socio-economic background.

Each of the 28 occupations possessed three weighted coefficients on a seven-point scale: one for salary, one for prerequisite educational level, and one for level of supervision. A respondent's score on each of the three

dependent variables of salary, education, and supervision was determined separately by computing the sum of the coefficients of the occupations chosen for the three female case study subjects and subtracting it from the sum of the coefficients of the occupations chosen for the three male case study subjects. Scores were adjusted to assure that test forms were equivalent.

The data were collected over a four-month period. Eighty-six percent of the subjects returned their questionnaires. However, only 76 percent were completed sufficiently for use in the study. The data were analyzed using a variety of statistical tests, including multi-variate analysis of variance, univariate analysis of variance, and dependent t tests.

The results clearly demonstrated that the counselors in the study tended to choose lower paying occupations that are more highly supervised and require less prerequisite education for female case study subjects than for male subjects. The differences were statistically significant for all three variables.

It was also shown that the educational level of the counselor's mother had a statistically significant effect on the kinds of careers that both male and female counselors chose for female and male case study subjects. A counselor whose mother had an average amount of formal education tended to choose careers for female case study subjects that paid less, required less education and more supervision than counselors whose mothers had either more than or less than the average formal education.

Differences in the kinds of careers counselors chose for male and female subjects were also related to the demographic location of the schools in which the counselor worked. Those who worked in schools located in cities over 25,000 in population tended to choose careers for female subjects that were

different from those chosen for male subjects in regard to both preparation and remuneration.

When analyzed separately, neither the sex nor the age of the counselor alone appeared to have a statistically significant effect on the kinds of occupations chosen. However, there was a statistically significant interaction between them. Males over 40 years of age discriminated least against female case study subjects, followed by female counselors under 40, and male counselors under 40. Females over 40 years old exhibited the greatest discrepancy between the careers chosen for female and male case study subjects. This finding supports tentative similar conclusions suggested in the literature.

The only other significant two-way interaction was found between the counselor's age and the level of his or her father's education. A counselor who is under 40, and whose father had an average educational background, was least likely to choose lower paying occupations for females, whereas the counselor who is over 40, and whose father had less formal education than most people, was most likely to choose lower paying occupations for female case study subjects.

In brief, this study demonstrated that high school counselors tended to choose lower paying jobs that required less education and more supervision for female case study subjects than for identical male case study subjects. Female counselors over 40 exhibited the strongest predisposition to do this, whereas male counselors over 40 tended to discriminate least. Counselors who worked in schools situated in cities tended to discriminate less than counselors in rural schools. The amount of formal education attained by the counselor's mother and father was also related to this predisposition.

Schlossberg and Petrofessa made a statement which was paraphrased in one form or another in most recent reviews of the literature dealing with the vocational counseling of girls.

> "From the studies cited, it appears that couselors do ascribe roles to men and to women, and that counselors' interview behavior reflects these biases."[1]

However, even though counselors may show a bias against women, they are not alone. They merely reflect the bias in society, its schools and its labor market.

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1. Schlossberg, N.K., and Petrofessa, Op Cit. p.44.